

09/854,556
166539/00

2

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims to read as follows:

1-2. (Cancelled)

3. (Currently amended) A distributed processing method in which a processing task is distributed to a plurality of user terminals in a network and executed by the plurality of user terminals, said distributed processing method comprising:

 a collection/distribution server dividing said processing task into one or more processing units and distributing the units to said user terminals so that:

 each user terminal of said plurality of user terminals receiving a processing unit transmitted from said collection/distribution server via the network can execute the processing unit under control of a license application installed in the user terminal; and

 each user terminal of said plurality of user terminals can then send back a processing result to said collection/distribution server via the network,

 wherein said license application provides each said user terminal with a license for using a user application as a value for executing said processing unit, said license indicating an agreement that said user application can be executed by said user terminal as a value for executing said processing unit, instead of paying a predetermined license fee.

4. (Currently amended) A distributed processing method for a processing task, comprising:

 a user terminal obtaining a user application and a license application from an application server via a network;

09/854,556
166539/00

3

said application server transmitting information of a user who obtained said user application and said license application to a collection/distribution server;

said collection/distribution server accepting a request for a processing task from a customer terminal via the network;

said collection/distribution server dividing said processing task into a form which can be distributed and executed in a plurality of user terminals;

said collection/distribution server requesting said user terminal of executing the divided processing task based on the user information received from said application server;

said license application executing the divided processing task requested from said collection/distribution server by said license application on said user terminal, and sending back a processing result to said collection/distribution server from said user terminal;

said license application providing the user terminal with a license key for said user application installed to said user terminal, said license indicating an agreement that said user application can be executed by said user terminal as a value for executing said processing unit, instead of paying a predetermined license fee; and

said collection/distribution server integrating the processing results of the processing task collected from said user terminals to transmit an integrated result to said customer terminal.

5. (Original) The distributed processing method according to claim 4, wherein said license application runs as a background processing on said user terminal.

09/854,556
166539/00

6. (Original) The distributed processing method according to claim 5, further comprising:

 said application server accounting to said collection/distribution server in accordance with a number of the license applications supplied to said user terminal.

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Currently amended) A distributed processing system in which a processing task is executed by a plurality of user terminals, comprising:

 a collection/distribution server which divides a processing task requested from a customer terminal into a plurality of processing units and distributes said processing units to said user terminals via the network; and

 an application server which supplies said user terminals with a user application and a license application in response to a request from said user terminals,

 wherein the license application supplied to said user terminal allows said processing unit to be executed on said user terminal and a processing result obtained therefrom to be sent back, when said user terminal receives one or more said processing units from said collection/distribution server, said license application also provides the user terminal with a license key for using said user application, said license indicating an agreement that said user application can be executed by said user terminal as a value for executing said processing unit, instead of paying a predetermined license fee.

9. (Original) The distributed processing system according to claim 8, further comprising:

09/854,556
166539/00

a first user database which connects to said application server and which stores user information of said user terminals, to which said application server supplied the user application and the license application,

wherein said application server notifies said collection/distribution server of the user information when storing the user information into the first database.

10. (Previously presented) The distributed processing system according to claim 9, further comprising:

a second user database which connects to said collection/distribution server and which stores the user information received by said collection/distribution server from said application server,

wherein said collection/distribution server manages the user terminals which execute a divided processing task based on contents in said second user database.

11. (Original) The distributed processing system according to claim 10,

wherein the license application supplied to said user terminal requests the processing unit to said collection/distribution server when the license application runs on said user terminal.

12-16. (Canceled)

17. (Currently amended) A signal-bearing medium embodying a program of machine-readable instructions executable by a digital processing apparatus, said program causing a

6

09/854,556

166539/00

user terminal, being in a distributed processing system comprising:

- a collection/distribution server;
- an application server;
- at least one or more user terminals; and
- a network mutually connecting the foregoing,

to perform a method of distributed processing, said method comprising:

receiving a license key capable of using a specified user application from said application server;

executing at least one or more processing units received from said collection/distribution server on said user terminal;

sending back a result of executing said processing unit to said collection/distribution server; and

applying said license key to said user application on said user terminal as a value for executing said processing units, said license key defining a license indicating an agreement that said user application can be executed by said user terminal as a value for executing said processing unit, instead of paying a predetermined license fee.

18-21. (Canceled)

22. (New) The method of claim 3, wherein said license indicates an agreement that said user application can be executed by said user terminal at another license fee, which is less than said predetermined license fee by a predetermined amount based on having executed said processing unit.

09/854,556
166539/00

7

23. (New) The method of claim 4, wherein said license indicates an agreement that said user application can be executed by said user terminal at another license fee, which is less than said predetermined license fee by a predetermined amount based on having executed said processing unit.

24. (New) The system of claim 8, wherein said license indicates an agreement that said user application can be executed by said user terminal at another license fee, which is less than said predetermined license fee by a predetermined amount based on having executed said processing unit.

25. (New) The signal-bearing medium of claim 17, wherein said license indicates an agreement that said user application can be executed by said user terminal at another license fee, which is less than said predetermined license fee by a predetermined amount based on having executed said processing unit.